

Message Text

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TO USDEL SECRETARY PRIORITY

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FOLLOWING REPEATS VIENTIANE 4598 ACTION DEPT INFO BANGKOK

UDORN DEPCHJUSMAGTHAI, CDR USSAGE/7TH AF NKP, 13TH AF

13TH ADVON CC UDORN, CINCPAC JUNE 28TH

QUOTE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE VIENTIANE 4598

BANGKOK ALSO FOR RAMSEY, USAID/LAOS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PFOR LA US

SUBJ: DEMONSTRATORS OCCUPY EMBASSY GSO COMPOUND AND USIS
FACILITIES

SUMMARY: SHORTLY AFTER 0200 HOURS LOCAL JUNE 28 PROTESTORS
OCCUPIED EMBASSY GSO COMPOUND AND ALSO STATIONED GUARDS AT
GATE OF ADJACENT STAFF HOUSING COMPLEX KNOWN AS SILVER CITY.
THEY ATTEMPTED WITHOUT SUCCESS TO OBTAIN KEYS TO BUILDINGS
ON COMPOUND FROM MAINTENANCE CONTRACTOR REPS. WE GOT
FOREIGN MINISTER'S CHEF DE CABINET OUT OF BED AT 0345 AND
OBTAINED HIS AGREEMENT TO MEET AT SITE AT 0600. WE IMMEDI-
ATELY OBTAINED PERMISSION FOR TDY PERSONNEL RETURNING TO
BANGKOK TO LEAVE SILVER CITY IN ORDER TO CATCH EARLY
MORNING FLIGHT AND SOON AFTER ESTABLISHED FREEDOM OF
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MOVEMENT FOR EMPLOYEES WHO LIVE IN SILVER CITY. THIS
AGREEMENT HAS SO FAR HELD TO EXTENT THAT EMPLOYEES HAVE
BEEN ABLE TO COME TO CHANCERY.

FOR TIME BEING DEMONSTRATORS REMAIN IN GSO COMPOUND PROPER. SOME OF THEM ARE FROM USAID PROTEST COMMITTEE AND THEY APPARENTLY BELIEVE THAT USAID PROPERTY "WHICH NOW BELONGS TO PEOPLE OF LAOS" IS STORED THERE. BALANCE OF THEIR DEMANDS, IF ANY, ARE NOT CLEAR TO US NOR, WE SENSE, TO FOREIGN MINISTRY REPS WHO MADE GUIDED TOUR OF COMPOUND WITH SECOND-ECHELON PROTESTORS. (THERE ARE ALSO SOME APPARENT STUDENTS AMONG GROUP AND A FEW UNIFORMED AND ARMED PATHET LAO; NUMBERS ARE IN CONSTANT FLUX BUT ENTIRE GROUP PROBABLY DOES NOT EXCEED 50.) FONMIN'S CHEF DE CABINET HAS UNDERTAKEN TO MAKE FURTHER CONTACT WITH PROTESTORS AND LET US KNOW RESULTS.

MEANWHILE, USIS LIBRARY AND LARGELY VACATED USIS OFFICES ABOVE IT HAVE BEEN SIMILARLY BLOCKADED BY TWO OR THREE PATHET LAO TROOPS WHO WERE EARLIER COORDINATING WITH RADIO-EQUIPPED MOBILE PROTESTOR UNIT. THIS ACTION BEGAN SOMEWHAT LATER THAN THAT AT GSO BUT STILL BEFORE DAWN; PRELIMINARY REPORT CONTAINED SEPTTEL (USIAC). FENCE IN FRONT OF USIS, LIKE FENCE AROUND GSO COMPOUND, IS BEDECKED WITH WRAPPING-PAPER POSTERS WHICH CARRY CRUDE ANTI-AMERICAN THEMES. THEY SEEM TO BE MAINLY REPETITION OF "AMERICAN IMPERIALISTS GO HOME" IDEA, AND THERE ARE SOME REFERENCES TO JUNE 30 AS DEADLINE FOR ALL AMERICANS TO DEPART. END SUMMARY.

1. PROTESTORS, AT LEAST SOME OF WHOM COME FROM USAID PROTEST COMMITTEE, AND THEIR STUDENT AND PATHET LAO ALLIES HAVE EVIDENTLY DECIDED TO GIVE SAME TREATMENT THAT USAID GOT TO OTHER MISSION FACILITIES.

2. BEGINNING SHORTLY AFTER 0200 HOURS LOCAL JUNE 28, PROTESTORS AND A SMALL NUMBER OF JOINT POLICE ENTERED EMBASSY GSO COMPOUND AND ALSO STATIONED THEMSELVES AT GATES TO ADJACENT STAFF HOUSING COMPLEX KNOWN AS SILVER CITY. THEY ATTEMPTED TO OBTAIN KEYS TO WAREHOUSE AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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OFFICES WITHIN GSO COMPOUND FROM NIGHT DUTY CLERK EMPLOYED BY UNIVERSAL AMERICAN ENTERPRISES, INC. (UAE). UPON LEARNING THAT CLERK DID NOT HAVE KEYS, THEY WENT TO RESIDENCE OF UAE ASSISTANT PROJECT MANAGER, ROBERT KING, WHO TOLD THEM THAT HE DID NOT HAVE THE KEYS EITHER. THEY NEXT VISITED HOUSE FORMERLY OCCUPIED BY GSO AND WHEN THEY FOUND IT VACANT, WENT NEXT DOOR TO ADMIN COUNSELOR'S RESIDENCE. SECURITY OFFICER AND PERSONNEL OFFICER HAD ARRIVED ON SCENE BY THIS TIME AND WERE FOR A FEW MINUTES APPARENTLY NOT FREE TO LEAVE. HOWEVER, UAE MANAGER EVENTUALLY PERSUADED PROTESTORS TO LEAVE ADMIN COUNSELOR'S YARD AND TO ALLOW HIM AND TWO EMBASSY OFFICERS TO GO TO CHANCERY.

3. OTHER MISSION PERSONNEL HAD, MEANWHILE, BEEN ALERTED TO SITUATION. POL COUNSELOR TELEPHONED FOREIGN MINISTER'S CHEF DE CABINET SOUBANH SRITHIRATH, AT HIS QUARTERS AT 0345 LOCAL, TO INFORM HIM OF SITUATION AND TO REMIND HIM THAT ON TWO PRECEEDING DAYS WE HAD MENTIONED RUMORS THAT THIS ACTION WOULD TAKE PLACE AND HAD ASKED THAT IT BE AVERTED. POL COUNSELOR ALSO RECALLED THAT SAME RUMORS HAD BEEN REPORTED JUNE 27 TO MINISTER OF ECONOMY, SOTH PHETRASY AND THAT BOTH OFFICIALS HAD BEEN INVITED TO TOUR GSO COMPOUND PERSONALLY AND TO SEND REPRESENTATIVES FOR THAT PURPOSE.

4. POL COUNSELOR OFFERED TO PICK SOUBANH UP IMMEDIATELY AND TAKE HIM TO SCENE. SOUBANH PROPOSED MEETING ON SITE AFTER DAYBREAK AND AGREED TO 0600 RENDEZVOUS. WHEN POL COUNSELOR, UAE MANAGER AND TWO EMBASSY OFFICERS ARRIVED AT GSO GATE, MINUTES BEFORE 0600, SOUBANH AND AN ATTACHE DE CABINET WERE ALREADY THERE AND CONVERSING WITH PROTEST LEADERS.

5. AS MATTER OF FIRST PRIORITY, EMBASSY RAISED ISSUE OF TWO TEJ EMPLOYEES WHO HAD TO BE AT AIRPORT BY 0700 TO CATCH FLIGHT TO BANGKOK. THESE TWO EMPLOYEES AND A PERMANENTLY ASSIGNED SECRETARY WHO HAD NOT YET UNPACKED WERE PERMITTED TO DEPART SILVER CITY WITHOUT FURTHER INCIDENT. MEANWHILE, UAE MANAGER AND POL COUNSEL CONDUCTED SOUBANH, HIS ATTACHE, AND FOUR OR FIVE PROTESTORS ON TOUR THROUGH GSO OFFICES AND FROM WARE-
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HOUSE AND OTHER FACILITIES ON GSO COMPOUND. DURING TOUR, THERE WAS RUNNING DIALOGUE WITH PROTESTORS WHOSE MOTIVES WERE NEVER CLEARLY DEFINED BEYOND SUSPICION THAT SOME OF THE APPLIANCES AND FURNITURE STORED IN GSO COMPOUND ACTUALLY BELONGED TO USAID AND SHOULD THUS BECOME PROPERTY OF "LAO PEOPLE." ONE DEMONSTRATOR SUGGESTED THAT EACH APPLIANCE BE CHECKED AGAINST INVENTORY TO PROVE IT DID NOT BELONG TO USAID. TOUR GUIDES REPLIED THAT THEY COULD NOT EVEN CONSIDER SUCH A PROJECT UNLESS OFFICIAL REQUEST CAME THROUGH FOREIGN MINISTRY AND EVEN THEN WOULD FIND IT HIGHLY IRREGULAR. SOUBANH, WHEN ASKED WHETHER PGNU FAVORED SUCH AN APPROACH, AVOIDED A DIRECT UNSWER AND SUGGESTED THAT TOUR CONTINUE. DURING COURSE OF TOUR, THERE WAS OPP-
ORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN WHO WORKS IN GSO COMPOUND, GSO HIMSELF WHO IS FIRST SECRETARY OF EMBASSY; ONE OTHER STATE EMPLOYEE AS OF TODAY; AND UAE PROJECT MANAGER AND HIS ASSISTANT. FACT THAT UAE REPS ARE WORKING UNDER CONTRACT WITH STATE AND NOT WITH USAID WAS ALSO SET FORTH. IN ADDITION, HEAVY STRESS WAS PUT ON FACT THAT VIRTUALLY ALL OTHER EMPLOYEES WHO REGULARLY WORK IN GSO COMPOUND ARE LAO ON

ROLLS OF STATE OR UAE.

6. SOUBANH AND HIS ATTACHE SAID LITTLE DURING TOUR AND DID NOT SEEM PARTICULARLY IMPRESSED WITH PROTESTORS' ARGUMENTS. AT CONCLUSION OF TOUR, SOUBANH SAID HE RECOGNIZED THAT EMBASSY HAD "RIGHT" TO DEAL WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY ON THIS PROBLEM AND SAID HE WOULD TALK FURTHER WITH PROTESTORS AND TELEPHONE RESULTS TO EMBASSY DURING THE COURSE OF THE DAY. POL COUNSELOR NOTED THAT THIS EPISODE, LIKE ANY OTHER VIOLATION OF OUR DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY, WOULD HAVE TO BE REPORTED TO WASHINGTON. HE SAID HE WOULD PREFER NOT TO HAVE TO TELL WASHINGTON THAT AMERICAN EMPLOYEES WERE IN EFFECT BEING HELD HOSTAGE IN ADJACENT SILVER CITY COMPOUND. SOUBANH WENT OFF TO CONFER WITH RANKING PROTESTORS ON SCENE AND RETURNED IN A MATTER OF MINUTES TO SAY THAT PRINCIPLE OF FREE ENTRY AND EXIT FROM SILVER CITY AND EMBASSY MEDICAL UNIT, WHICH IS ALSO IN RESIDENTIAL COMPOUND, HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED. SOUBANH AND POL COUNSELOR AGREED THAT NO GSO OR UAE EMPLOYEE, REGARDLESS OF NATIONALITY, WOULD REPORT FOR WORK IN GSO COMPOUND PENDING RESOLUTION OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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ISSUES THERE.

7. SOUBANH VOLUNTEERED IN ADDITION THAT PROTESTORS WOULD "TOUCH NOTHING" AND THAT NO VEHICLES OR OTHER PROPERTY WOULD BE REMOVED FROM GSO COMPOUND. AT THIS POINT, TOUR PARTICIPANTS WENT THEIR SEPARATE WAYS. OTHER AMERICAN EMPLOYEES WHO LIVED IN SILVER CITY HAVE SINCE LEFT FOR WORK WITHOUT INCIDENT, BUT PROTESTORS ARE APPARENTLY ORDERING LAO DOMESTIC SERVANTS TO LEAVE SILVER CITY AND IN AT LEAST ONE CASE HAVE OBTAINED KEYS TO A HOUSE UNIT FROM A DOMESTIC AS SHE LEFT. EMBASSY MEDICAL OFFICER HAS GONE TO MEDICAL UNIT TO ESTABLISH PRINCIPLE OF HIS RIGHT TO BE THERE AND WILL REMAIN FOR A WHILE, EVEN IF NO PATIENTS APPEAR.

8. SIMILAR TREATMENT OF USIS LIBRARY AND LARGELY VACATED OFFICE SPACE IN SAME BUILDING BEGAN IN PRE-DAWN HOURS. AS REPORTED, VIENTIANE 4596 (USIAC), ONLY THREE ARMED AND UNIFORMED PATHET LAO ARE CURRENTLY AT USIS BUILDING. HOWEVER, EMBOFF OBSERVED PROTESTORS WITH RADIO EQUIPMENT TALKING WITH PATHET LAO OUTSIDE USIS AS EARLY AS 0330.

9. AT GSO COMPOUND AND ALSO IN FRONT OF USIS, THERE ARE NUMEROUS POSTERS MADE OF BROWN WRAPPING PAPER WITH LETTERING WHICH CAN BE READ ONLY FROM A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY. WE WILL HAVE FULLER IDEA OF CONTEXT OF THESE POSTERS LATER IN THE DAY. MOST OF THOSE SO FAR BEGAN

WITH LANGUAGE DEMANDING THAT AMERICANS (OR CIA) GO HOME. SOME, HOWEVER, SEEM TO HAVE SPECIFIC DATES SUCH AS JUNE 30, WHICH, OF COURSE, WAS DEADLINE SPECIFIED IN MAY 27 FOR DISSOLUTION OF USAID AND DEPARTURE OF ALL OF THOSE AMERICAN PERSONNEL.

10. COMMENT: AS INDICATED ABOVE, THE PROTESTORS' COMPLAINTS OR DEMANDS ARE APPARENTLY NOT EVEN CLEAR TO FOREIGN MINISTRY REPS AND ARE CERTAINLY NOT CLEAR TO US. THE ONE BEFINITE ELEMENT IS REAL OR FEIGNED SUSPICION THAT USAID PROPERTY IS BEING HIDDEN IN GSO COMPOUND. BEYOND THAT, PROTESTORS MANIFESTED SUSPICION ABOUT IDENTITY OF DIRECT HIRE AND CONTRACT EMPLOYEES WHO WORK LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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IN CEUPOUND AND AT ONE POINT SUGGESTED THAT THERE WAS NO MORE NEED FOR "FOREIGN CONTRACTORS" IN LAOS. AS A MORE GENERAL OBSERVATION, WE SUSPECT THAT OUR PRE-EMPTIVE ACTION -- DELIVERING OUR NOTE BEFORE WE RECEIVED NOTE FROM PGNU, ABANDONING USAID PROPERTY BECAUSE IT HAD PROVED IMPOSSIBLE TO NEGOTIATE WITH PGNU, AND ABORTING TURNOVER CEREMONY THAT PGNU AND PROTESTORS WANTED -- HAS LEFT PROTESTORS "BEHIND THE POWER CURVE." PROTESTORS ARE NOW HAVING TO CAST ABOUT FOR OTHER TARGETS AND HAVE FOR THE MOMENT SETTLED ON GSO AND USIS. FACT THAT THESE FACILITIES HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH USAID MAY UNDERCUT PROTESTORS' CAUSE AND PGNU'S WILLINGNESS TO SUPPORT THEM TO THE HILT. WE BELIEVE WE ACCOMPLISHED A GOOD DEAL, EVEN BEFORE BREAKFAST, AND WE WILL, OF COURSE, BE PURSUING MATTER THROUGHOUT THE DAY WITH SOUBANH AND WCHH OTHER PGNU OFFICIALS.

11. WITH DEPARTURE THIS MORNING, OUR STRENGTH STANDS AT 42. WE ARE NOW STUDYING ADVISABILITY OF MOVING SUBSTANTIAL PART OF REMAINING STAFF TO UDORN THROUGH MONDAY. WILL ADVISE. CHAPMAN
UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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